

Lassa Fever

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What is it?

Lassa fever is an acute viral haemorrhagic illness caused by Lassa virus, a member of the arena-virus Family of viruses. It was **discovered in 1969 and is named after the town in Nigeria** where the first cases occurred.

How does it infect humans?

- Humans usually become infected with Lassa virus **through exposure to food or household items contaminated with urine or faeces of infected Mastomys rats.**
- Person-to-person infections and laboratory transmission can also occur, particularly in health care settings in the absence of adequate infection prevention and control measures.

Areas where Lassa Fever is endemic are:

- The disease is endemic in the rodent population in parts of West Africa.
- It is known to be endemic in Benin, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Sierra Leone, Togo and Nigeria

Other key facts about the fever

- The overall case-fatality rate is 1%. Among patients who are hospitalized with the severe clinical presentation of Lassa fever, case-fatality is estimated at around 15%. Early supportive care with rehydration and symptomatic treatment improves survival.
- About 80% of people who become infected with Lassa virus have no symptoms. 1 in 5 infections result in severe disease, where the virus affects several organs such as the liver, spleen and kidneys.

